



**Connecticut
Public Health
Association**

Promoting Public Health in Connecticut Since 1916

Connecticut Public Health Association

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Testimony of the Connecticut Public Health Association

*In Support of Raised Bill 277: An Act Establishing a Council to Promote Collaboration Between
Local Health Departments and the Department of Public Health*

To the Distinguished Co-Chairs and Members of the Public Health Committee

March 8, 2012

Good afternoon, Representative Ritter, Senator Gerratana and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Pamela Reyes and I am a Registered Nurse in the state of Connecticut, a graduate student at the University of Hartford, and an intern for the Connecticut Public Health Association's Advocacy Committee (CPHA).

As a representative of the Advocacy Committee of CPHA, I am writing on behalf of Raised Bill 277: An Act Establishing a Council to Promote Collaboration Between Local Health Departments and the Department of Public Health which would establish a process for collaboration and partnership between state and local public health officials. CPHA supports enhanced communication and relationship building between state and local public health agencies as both are equally responsible for the promotion of health and prevention of illness of every resident and community in Connecticut. Improved collaboration between state and local public health is good public health policy.

The establishment of a council in Connecticut is one model for institutionalizing such collaboration. Other states have created public health councils that function in varying capacities. The California Public Health Act of 2006 created a Public Health Advisory Committee (PHAC) to make recommendations on the development of policies and programs to promote health and wellness [1]. The State of Minnesota created a State Community Health Services Advisory Committee through legislation in 1976. The committee is comprised of 52 members representing the 52 Community Health Boards in Minnesota with the purpose of making recommendations to the Commissioner of Health on matters concerning development, funding, and evaluation of community health services [2]. These are just two examples of local and state public health representatives collaborating to improve public health.

According to the Institute of Medicine (IOM) report, *Speaking of Health* (2002), communication is fundamental to effective public health policy and programs. The report outlines strategies and recommendations based on research surrounding the challenges of effective communication within a diverse population. The primary recommendation related to public health infrastructure was to establish interdisciplinary teams to develop models of communication [3]. The IOM report *The Future of the Public's Health in the 21st Century* (2002) suggests that the nation's public health system is "fragmented" overall and in need of

attention. It is recommended that, at all levels of public health, communication be enhanced and facilitated. The findings of the report indicate a direct correlation between developed communication processes within the public health system and the assurance of improved health in the communities served [4]. Two recent reports by the IOM recommend enhanced communication and collaboration between governmental public health agencies and their partners in order to improve and strengthen public health data measurement strategies [5], and public health laws and policies [6].

Established processes of communication between local departments, boards of public health and the state Department of Public Health can lead to an overall improvement in utilization of scarce resources, and to targeted, relevant public health services on the community level. In addition to representation from state and local public health, and to further advance improved communication between all public health entities, CPHA respectfully recommends representation of local boards of health on the proposed Council.

CPHA is a nonprofit organization established in 1918 and comprised of voluntary members from all facets of the public health workforce in Connecticut that has long championed strengthening the fragmented public health infrastructure in our state. A Public Health Council that supports collaboration between local public health, local boards of health and state public health representatives is a means to promote improved communication among public health entities in Connecticut. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,
Pamela Reyes, RN, BSN
CPHA Graduate Intern

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